

## CLAIMS

What Is Claimed Is:

1. An E-mail sending method wherein

an agent is displayed on a screen and the behavior of the agent is managed by

5 agent parameters and wherein

on accepting a sending command for commanding sending of an E-mail, agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent are annexed to the main text of the mail having an appended mail header for sending the E-mail.

10 2. The method for sending an E-mail as claimed in claim 1 wherein a single E-mail is sent by a single agent.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent include the sending date and time information and can be annexed to the  
15 main text of an E-mail sent next after lapse of pre-set time based on the sending date and time information.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein, by receiving the agent parameters determining the agent parameter, automatically returned from the destination, the agent parameters  
20 can be annexed to the main text of an E-mail sent next.

5. The method for sending an E-mail as claimed in claim 1 wherein a sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a single agent and a sending command for designating sending plural E-mails by a single agent are selectively accepted; and  
25 wherein

on accepting the sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a single agent, the agent parameters determining the agent behavior are annexed to the main text of the E-mail for sending the E-mail.

30 6. An E-mail sending apparatus, comprising:

an agent manager for displaying an agent on a screen and for managing the behavior of the agent depending on agent parameters;

sending command accepting means for accepting a sending command designating sending an E-mail; and

5 mail sending means which, on accepting a sending command designating sending an E-mail by said sending command accepting means, is controlled by said agent manager for appending the agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent to the mail header or to an annexed main text of the E-mail for sending the E-mail.

10 7. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said agent manager sends an E-mail by the single agent from said mail sending means.

8. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said agent parameters determining the  
15 behavior of the agent includes the sending date and time information; and wherein said agent manager can append the agent parameters to the main text of an E-mail sent next by said mail sending means after lapse of a pre-set time as from the sending date and time based on the sending date and time information.

20 9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said agent manager receives the agent parameters determining the agent behavior, automatically returned from the destination, so that said agent parameters can be annexed to the main text of an E-mail sent next by said mail sending means.

25 10. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said sending command accepting means selectively accepts a sending command for designating sending of a single E-mail by a single agent or a sending command for designating sending of a plurality of E-mails by a single agent and wherein

30 on accepting the sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a single agent, said agent manager annexes the agent parameters determining the agent behavior to the main text of the E-mail by said mail sending means for sending the E-mail.

11. A method for receiving an E-mail, wherein  
an E-mail is received on accepting a reception command designating reception of an  
E-mail; and wherein

5 the behavior of an agent is controlled responsive to agent parameters annexed  
to the received main text of the mail for displaying the agent on a screen.

12. An apparatus for receiving an E-mail, comprising:  
reception command accepting means for accepting a command for receiving an  
10 E-mail;

reception means for receiving an E-mail on accepting the reception command  
commanding reception of the E-mail by said reception command accepting means; and  
an agent manager for controlling the behavior of the agent responsive to agent  
parameters annexed to the main text of the mail received by said reception means for  
15 displaying the agent on a screen.

13. The apparatus for receiving an E-mail as claimed in claim 12 wherein said  
agent manager automatically transmits the agent parameters annexed to the main text  
of the mail received by said reception means.

14. A method for sending/receiving an E-mail wherein  
an agent is displayed on a screen and the behavior of the agent is managed by  
agent parameters, and on accepting a sending command for commanding sending of an  
E-mail, agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent are annexed to the  
25 main text of the mail having an appended mail header for sending the E-mail; and  
wherein

an E-mail is received on accepting a reception command designating reception  
of an E-mail and the behavior of an agent is controlled responsive to agent parameters  
annexed to the received main text of the mail for displaying the agent on a screen.

15. The method for sending/receiving an E-mail as claimed in claim 14 wherein a  
single E-mail is sent by a single agent.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent include the sending date and time information based on which the agent parameters can be annexed to the main text of an E-mail sent next after lapse of a pre-set time.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein, by receiving the agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent, it becomes possible to annex the agent parameters to the main text of the E-mail sent next.

18. The method of claim 14 wherein a sending command for designating sending of a single E-mail by a single agent and a sending command for designating sending of a plurality of E-mails by a single agent are selectively accepted and wherein on accepting the sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a single agent, the agent parameters determining the agent behavior are annexed to the main text of the E-mail for sending the E-mail.

19. An apparatus for sending/receiving an E-mail, comprising:  
an agent manager for displaying an agent on a screen and for managing the behavior of said agent responsive to agent parameters;  
sending command accepting means for accepting said sending command designating sending an E-mail;

mail sending means which, on accepting said sending command designating sending an E-mail by said sending command accepting means, annexes agent parameters determining the agent behavior to the main text of a mail having an appended mail header for sending the E-mail;

reception command accepting means for accepting a reception command designating the reception of an E-mail; and

receiving means for receiving an E-mail on accepting a reception command designating the reception of the E-mail by said reception command accepting means.

20. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said agent manager sends an E-mail by a single agent from said mail sending means.

21. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent includes the sending date and time information; and wherein said agent manager can append the agent parameters to the main text of an E-mail sent next by said mail sending means after lapse of a pre-set time as from the sending date and time based on the sending date and time information.

22. The apparatus of claim 21 wherein said agent manager receives the agent parameters determining the agent behavior, automatically returned from the destination, so that said agent parameters can be annexed to the main text of an E-mail sent next by said mail sending means.

23. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said sending command accepting means selectively accepts a sending command for designating sending of a single E-mail by a single agent or a sending command for designating sending of a plurality of E-mails by a single agent and wherein

on accepting the sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a single agent by said sending command accepting means, said agent manager annexes the agent parameters determining the agent behavior to the main text of the E-mail by said mail sending means for sending the E-mail.

24. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said agent manager automatically transmits the agent parameters annexed to the main text of the mail received by said reception means.

25. A sending program supplying medium for an E-mail for supplying an E-mail sending program that can be read out and executed by a computer wherein an agent is displayed on a screen and the behavior of the agent is managed by agent parameters, wherein

on accepting a sending command for commanding sending of an E-mail, agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent are annexed to the main text of the mail having an appended mail header for sending the E-mail.

5 26. The medium of claim 25 wherein a single E-mail is sent by a single agent.

27. The medium of claim 26 wherein the agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent include the sending date and time information based on which the agent parameters can be annexed to the main text of an E-mail sent next after lapse  
10 of a pre-set time.

28. The medium of claim 27 wherein by receiving the agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent, it becomes possible to annex the agent parameters to the main text of the E-mail sent next.

15 29. The medium of claim 25 wherein a sending command for designating sending of a single E-mail by a single agent and a sending command for designating sending of a plurality of E-mails by a single agent are selectively accepted and wherein  
on accepting the sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a  
20 single agent, the agent parameters determining the agent behavior are annexed to the main text of the E-mail for sending the E-mail.

30. A receiving program supplying medium for an E-mail for supplying an E-mail receiving program that can be read out and executed by a computer wherein  
25 on accepting a reception command designating reception of an E-mail, the E-mail is received, and the behavior of the agent is controlled responsive to agent parameters annexed to the main text of the received mail for displaying the agent on a screen.

30 31. A sending/receiving program supplying medium for an E-mail for supplying an E-mail sending/receiving program that can be read out and executed by a computer wherein

an agent is displayed on a screen and the behavior of the agent is managed by agent parameters;

on accepting a sending command designating sending of an E-mail, agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent are annexed to the main text of the mail having an appended mail header for sending the E-mail;

an E-mail is received on accepting a reception command designating reception of an E-mail; and

the behavior of an agent is controlled responsive to agent parameters annexed to the received main text of the mail for displaying the agent on a screen.

32. The medium of claim 31 wherein a single E-mail is sent by a single agent.

33. The medium for an E-mail of claim 32 wherein the agent parameters determining the behavior of the agent include the sending date and time information and can be annexed to the main text of an E-mail sent next after lapse of pre-set time based on the sending date and time information.

34. The medium of claim 33 wherein, by receiving the agent parameters determining the agent parameter automatically returned from the destination, the agent parameters can be annexed to the main text of the E-mail sent next.

35. The medium of claim 31 wherein a sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a single agent and a sending command for designating sending plural E-mails by a single agent are selectively accepted and wherein

on accepting the sending command for designating sending an E-mail by a single agent, the agent parameters determining the agent behavior are annexed to the main text of the E-mail for sending the E-mail.

36. A method of E-mail transmission, comprising the steps of: providing an agent on a display unit, said agent configured for display on said display unit;

providing a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters configured to determine the behavior of said agent on said display unit;

detecting one or more events corresponding to one or more of said plurality of agent parameters; and

continuously updating said plurality of agent parameters in accordance with said detection step such that said behavior of said agent is continuously modified.

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37. The method of claim 36 further including the step of detecting a send command for transmitting an E-mail.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein when said send command is detected, said agent is no longer displayed on said display unit.

39. The method of claim 37 wherein when said send command is detected, said agent is temporarily displayed on said display unit as an animation.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein said E-mail is displayed on said display unit and said animated agent retrieves said displayed E-mail.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein said animated agent with said retrieved E-mail is displayed as leaving the display unit for delivery of said E-mail to a recipient.

42. The method of claim 41 wherein said E-mail is configured with a predetermined time period such that when said agent is not displayed on the display unit as returning within said predetermined time period, automatically updating said agent parameters such that said agent is displayed in said display unit.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein when said recipient receives said E-mail within said predetermined time period, automatically transmitting a return receipt such that said agent parameters are updated.

44. The method of claim 42 wherein when said recipient receives said E-mail within said predetermined time period, said agent is displayed on said display unit.



45. The method of claim 37 further including the step of encoding said agent parameters and annexing said encoded agent parameters to said E-mail.

46. The method of claim 37 further including the step of updating agent presence flag reflecting the state of display of said agent on said display unit.

47. The method of claim 46 wherein said agent presence flag is set to 1 when said agent is displayed on said display unit, and further, wherein said agent presence flag is set to 0 when said agent is not displayed on said display unit.

48. The method of claim 37 wherein said E-mail is displayed as a three-dimensional graphics representation of one of a letter, a postcard, or a package.

49. The method of claim 36 wherein with each detected event, said plurality of agent parameters is modified to update said behavior of said agent.

50. The method of claim 49 wherein said display of said agent is continuously modified on said display unit with the updated behavior of said agent.

51. The method of claim 36 wherein said agent includes one of a pet or a postman.

52. The method of claim 51 wherein said pet is configured to deliver a single E-mail and said postman is configured to deliver multiple E-mails.

53. The method of claim 51 wherein said pet and said postman are configured for display as three-dimensional graphical representation on said display unit.

54. An of E-mail transmission apparatus, comprising: a display unit configured for displaying an agent;

a memory for storing a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters configured to determine the behavior of said agent;

a controller for detecting one or more events corresponding to one or more of said plurality of agent parameters;

- wherein said controller continuously update said plurality of agent parameters stored in said memory based on detecting said events such that said behavior of said agent is continuously modified.

55. The apparatus of claim 54 wherein said controller is further configured to detect a send command for transmitting an E-mail.

56. The apparatus of claim 55 wherein when said send command is detected, said agent is no longer displayed on said display unit.

57. The apparatus of claim 55 wherein when said send command is detected, said agent is temporarily displayed on said display unit as an animation.

58. The apparatus of claim 39 wherein said E-mail is displayed on said display unit and said controller controls the display of said agent such that said animated agent is displayed as retrieving said E-mail.

59. The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said controller controls the display of said animated agent such that said animated agent with said retrieved E-mail is displayed as leaving the display unit for delivery of said E-mail to a recipient.

60. The apparatus of claim 59 wherein said processor appends a predetermined time period for said E-mail such that when said agent is not displayed on the display unit as returning within said predetermined time period, said processor automatically updates said agent parameters such that said agent is displayed in said display unit.

61. The apparatus of claim 60 wherein when said recipient receives said E-mail within said predetermined time period, said controller detects a return receipt and updates said stored agent parameters.

62. The apparatus of claim 60 wherein when said recipient receives said E-mail within said predetermined time period, said controller displays said agent on said display unit.

5 63. The apparatus of claim 55 further including an encoder for encoding said agent parameters such that said controller annexes said encoded agent parameters to said E-mail.

64. The apparatus of claim 55 wherein said controller is further configured to  
10 update an agent presence flag reflecting the state of display of said agent on said display unit.

65. The apparatus of claim 64 wherein said agent presence flag is set to 1 when  
said agent is displayed on said display unit, and further, wherein said agent presence  
15 flag is set to 0 when said agent is not displayed on said display unit.

66. The apparatus of claim 64 wherein said controller is configured to control said  
display unit such that said E-mail is displayed as a three-dimensional graphics  
representation of one of a letter, a postcard, or a package.

20 67. The apparatus of claim 54 wherein with each detected event, said controller modifies said plurality of agent parameters and updates said behavior of said agent.

68. The apparatus of claim 67 wherein said controller continuously modifies the  
25 display of said agent on said display unit with the updated behavior of said agent.

69. The apparatus of claim 54 wherein said agent includes one of a pet or a postman.

30 70. The apparatus of claim 69 wherein said controller is further configured such that said pet is configured to deliver a single E-mail and said postman is configured to deliver multiple E-mails.

71. The apparatus of claim 69 wherein said controller is further configured such that said pet and said postman are displayed as three-dimensional graphical representation on said display unit.

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